

IVANČICA MARKOVIĆ**GAME – AN EXAMPLE OF HISTORICAL INFLUENCE ON CULTURAL AND SOCIAL EVENTS DURING 18TH AND 19TH CENTURIES****Abstract**

In her work, the author presents the list of children's games (kept in the Brlic Family Archives in Slavonski Brod) from the first half of the 19th century. The list of children's games is in the manuscripts in the files of Ignjat Alojzije Brlic dated from 1830 to 1835. Using this list as an example, the author proves that children's games also played an important role in social and cultural events, especially in the socialising of children in Slavonia in 18th and the first half of 19th century.

Introduction

By implementing Theresian school reform in 1774, the state had assumed the role of regulating and controlling education (i.e. for the first time in the Habsburg Monarchy, education became a state matter) (on school rules in 1774 and Theresian school reform see Horbec & Švogar, 2010, pp. 5-47). However, due to poor financial support, reform progressed very slowly and did not have the effect of socialisation desired by the Enlightenment reformers. Even though the educational situation was a little better on the military frontier at the end of the 18th century in comparison to the civilian parts of Slavonia, the existing network of ordinary schools was not enough to support mass literacy. This would not happen until Mazuranic's reform. In these unfavourable educational conditions, other means of acquiring knowledge developed. One example of this can be found in the records of the Brlic Family Archives which lists children's games from the beginning of the 19th century. One can assume that similar games had existed previously, during the 18th century at the peak of the Enlightenment, because all the games listed contain entertaining as well as educational elements.

According to Johan Huizinga, culture has always been created and encouraged in games. Games were not limited by reason or separated from human norms (Huizinga, 1996, p. 168). Games are found as parts of culture even before culture itself. All important human activities have always been intertwined with games – from speech to beliefs and rituals. "The primeval community fulfils its consecration, sacrifice and mysteries through true game in the purest sense of the word" (Huizinga, 1996, p. 12). In 18th century culture, elements of game were present in many spheres, especially in the politics of European countries. Games were evident in the politics of state offices which were often filled with political games, intrigue, and open confrontation, and wars (Ibid, p. 169). The artistic world of the 18th century saw playfulness, especially in rural areas where people enjoyed gatherings and the richness of children's games. Since the era of Enlightenment was crucial in making the Habsburg Monarchy a modern and organised state, it is interesting to observe education and science being promoted by the government how these concepts were accepted by ordinary people. The best way to see this is through playing and games. Very often, games were a reflection of daily needs which later became a source of acquiring knowledge. This often added to learning and was

sometimes the primary way of acquiring knowledge and new information. In fact, receiving formal education at the beginning of 18th century in the Habsburg Monarchy was reserved only for a small number of people. This was seen particularly in rural areas in which higher levels of education were reserved for exceptionally talented children from wealthy families.

Everyday life was permeated with various requests, social expectations, and pressures which found their 'lighter' form in games. The children subconsciously re-enacted all occurrences from their own surroundings which influenced their lives. Besides acquiring knowledge, game was also important in preparing children for some serious activity later in life. Games very often reflected the need to rule and compete with others. They also suppressed harmful impulses, at the same time fulfilling wishes with their fiction and imagination (Ibid, p. 10).

Therefore, the list of games in the Brlic Family Archives is very important because it points out the values acquired during 18th and 19th centuries. Since culture is in its definition one way of limitation and self-control, children's games are a great source and example of learning social norms of those times.

The List of Games from the Brlic Family Archives

1. THE BIRDMAN

This game is a favourite when a lot of friends meet. People form a circle and choose one person to be the birdman. The birdman has to back away from the circle. The others choose a bird for each of themselves. The birdman then comes to the circle, the others cover his eyes, and the group forms a *kolo* (a dance in a circle) around him singing,

*Little birds jump all around,
Singing and turning,
But the birdman watches
Hoping to catch one
To stop it from singing.*

This is sung until the birdman whistles and when the sparrow whistles, the *kolo* stops, the birdman raises his hand and puts two of his fingers together, the index finger and the middle finger to make it seem he stopped and stretched out his hand. The chosen person has to approach the birdman and put his finger between the birdman's two fingers to show that the bird has been caught. Now the birdman shouts, 'Male, male! – or – female, female!' depending on which one he thinks he caught. If he is wrong, the one that was caught breaks free and turns in the *kolo* singing:

*Alas, birdman, the bird flew away
Because it was a male, not a female (or vice versa)
But do not fear, there are birds enough singing joyfully.
Stretch a hand and catch a few
So as not to stand unhappy!*

The birdman whistles again, the *kolo* stops and everything is repeated. When he guesses correctly, he catches this person and asks, '1. How big are you? 2. What do you look like? 3. How do you sing?' The one that was caught has to respond to these questions. If he is a sparrow, he will say small, with a big head. To the second question he answers, brown-grey, and to the third, I don't sing, I chirp.

Once these questions are answered, the *kolo* starts again and sings:

*Tell me quickly what kind of bird you have
It will fly away if you don't know its name.*

If the birdman does not guess which bird he caught while this is sung, he has to let it go and the *kolo* turns again singing,

*Oh, birdman, your bird flew away
Because it was not a lark but a sparrow.*

If he guesses which bird he caught, then the caught bird has to cover his eyes, kiss the birdman and become the new birdman. While this is happening, the *kolo* dances and sings,

*Oh, joyful birdman, rejoice now
Because you caught a young bird
To take your place now,
It already behaves like one.*

2. THE CRAFTSMAN

The group sits at the table and each member chooses which craft to represent. Each craftsman has to know how to describe his craft with his hands, e.g. shoemaker sows with his hands, blacksmith forges on the table... One member of the group is the guild master who governs the craftsmen. He has to know who chose which craft and its name. He orders the business to start, i.e. each craftsman uses his hands to explain his craft. The guild master suddenly, without saying a word, copies one and then another craftsman who has to do exactly as he does. Everybody has to watch the guild master carefully. If they do not, they have to give a pledge, if they dare to show with their hands what is not their craft, they have to give a pledge. One had to give a pledge for any wrongdoings in their work.

This is a pleasant and fun game. When a skilful guild master gets enough pledges, these are later redeemed.

3. A DAREDEVIL OR KERCHIEF AROUND THE KOLO

Children form a circle facing the *kolo* with their hands on their backs. One goes around the *kolo*, waving a woven kerchief and sings,

*A daredevil walks around
Alas for the one he hits
Those who turn
Will suffer the most.*

Everybody sings,
*To whomever he is near
I do not want to be next to.*

The child who goes around the *kolo* can go around two or three times and hit anybody who turns. During the singing, he puts the kerchief in anyone's hand and goes around until he reaches the one he gave the kerchief to and takes his place. At that moment he hits the person on his right with the kerchief who then has to run around the *kolo* until he gets to his place unless the one with the kerchief is faster and hits him before he takes his place. Then the song starts again and the child who has the kerchief goes around the *kolo* doing everything described all over again. In this game it is important to keep an eye on everyone so you can see where the kerchief is. If your left-side neighbour has it, you have to go around the *kolo* quickly so as not to get hit. Most of the time you can see where the kerchief is, but it often

happens that someone sees incorrectly so he runs in vain, and that is the funniest part.

4. THE RING

We put a ring on a rope of medium length (*pantlika*) tying the two parts of the rope. The children form a circle so that they hold the rope with both hands. They pull the ring on the rope quickly around the circle so that it cannot be seen where the ring is and it is hard to guess who is holding it. They can sing,

*The ring goes around the kolo,
Those who seek cannot see it
And if the seeker cannot find it
Whenever he finds it, the found one seeks.*

One child stands in the circle trying to guess where the ring is. When he thinks he knows where it is, he grabs the hand of this person. If he is right, the person holding the ring has to give a pledge, and if he is wrong, he has to give a pledge and continue the search.

5. BUYING OUT THE PLEDGE

When a game in which pledges are given is finished, all the pledges are put in a hat. One child takes them out. When he takes out a pledge he asks the first person next to him, ‘What must the one whose pledge I’m holding do?’ His friend says what can buy out the pledge and those whose pledge that is have to do it with no right to objection (so as not to spoil the group). He continues taking out the pledges and those who they belong to have to buy them out as it is said.

6. MAKING A BRIDGE

One boy has to form a bridge. He picks out a girl and they stand in the centre of the room. They hold their hands and raise them to form a bridge. Pairs go under the hands. When they lower their hands and catch a pair, this pair has to kiss to be let go. After the kiss, that pair forms the bridge. The game continues as long as the group wants it.

7. KISSEY’S YARD

The culprit stands in the centre of the room and calls forth the person of the opposite sex. They hold their hands and spread them to see whose yard is longer. Then the culprit kisses the person he called and this is called the kisser’s yard.

8. MAKING A STATUE

The one making a statue stands in the centre of the room, on a stool and has to pose the way someone from the group makes him. He stands until all members of the group have modelled him.

9. PICKING PARSLEY

If a boy is picking parsley, he has to approach a girl and say – I – pluck – parsley and kiss the girl after each word. When a girl picks parsley, she kisses the boys.

10. THE ORCHARD

The group sits in a circle; each member chooses which fruit to represent. One starts by saying, ‘An apple is the fruit chosen, but a plum does not deflect.’ Each of those who chose plum says the same thing for a different fruit, e.g. a plum is the fruit chosen but rowan does not deflect. If someone names the fruit that was not chosen, they have to give a pledge.

11. THE BAT

The group forms a *kolo*, one with his eyes covered is in the middle. The *kolo* moves slowly until he hits the ground with a stick, then it stops and starts again, and he points the stick to someone, this person approaches changing his voice three times. The bat has to name the person pointed. If he doesn't, he has to give a pledge, and the *kolo* continues turning, he has to guess all over again. If he guesses correctly, the other person has to give a pledge and take his place.

12. THE OLD CACKLER

One member of the group stands in the centre of the room. The other one approaches, takes him by the chin and says or sings,

*My dear old cackler,
I grip your chin firmly.
If you make me laugh
I will take your place.*

The old cackler has to pull different faces to make the other one laugh. If that person laughs, he has to give a pledge and be the old cackler. If he doesn't laugh, the old man has to give a pledge, and another member of the group approaches and does the same.

13. FALLING IN THE WELL

The culprit stands in the centre of the room saying, 'I fell in the well.' Another asks, 'How deep?' He responds, 'Two, three fathoms deep or as deep as you want.' Then they ask, 'Who will pull you out?' He chooses a person of the opposite sex to kiss him the number of fathoms he fell. Then the one who pulled him out takes his place and has to get out in the same manner.

14. BEGGING

The culprit takes the person of the opposite sex who wants to take him by the hand and goes from one person to another. If it is a boy, he stands in front of another boy saying, 'I am begging for some bread, and a kiss for my sister.' Then he stands in front of girls and says, 'I am begging for some bread for my sister, and a kiss for me.' (The bread is not given but kisses are).

15. KISSING THE DOOR

The culprit stands with his back to the door and calls for someone of the opposite sex to stand facing him. This person calls the third person of the same sex to stand with his back towards his. The fourth one calls another person to face him and so on until all members are lined up. Now the last one shouts, 'Turn around'. Those who were turned with their backs are now face to face and they hug and kiss. The culprit who was standing with his back to the door is now facing the door so he has to kiss it. This is his punishment.

16. SHOWING WHAT YOU ARE LIKE

The culprit goes from one person of the opposite sex to another asking to be kissed. It is up to each person to decide whether to kiss him or not.

17. THE BELL

One chair less than the number of children is set. When the *kolo* starts between the chairs, one has a bell. The *kolo* starts singing,

*Dance the kolo while the master is away,
For when he comes you cannot play.
He will be home soon,
Ring the bell before he does,
Be careful to hear the bell*

Because the kerchief will come soon.

The one with the bell rings and the *kolō* stops, each person tries to sit on a chair. The one who does not succeed gives a pledge, takes the bell and the game continues.

18. KISS YOUR SHADOW

A person stands in the light (of a candle or lantern) so that his shadow is cast on the person he wants to kiss.

Game as a form of secondary socialization

All of the games mentioned have the following similarities: they contain rules that each participant has to obey, they reflect the relations in the society that children are a part of, and they emphasize the hierarchy of important and desirable professions and achievements. Games were important because they helped children learn social values and norms. Although the rules of everyday life bear no significance to games, each of these games demanded order (Huizinga, 1996, p. 18). Even the slightest deviation ruined the game, rendering it useless and insignificant. It is indisputable that the need for order and discipline was one of the major elements of Maria Theresa and Joseph II's Enlightenment reforms. Children's games in 18th and 19th centuries therefore correspond to these aims and reflect them.

At the same time, being in the military was the primary profession of the Military Frontier. Every family or joint household had to have at least one man in the Habsburg army as a Frontier soldier from the age of 16 to 60. It is therefore surprising that there were no games to reflect this commonality. However, there is a game which replicates the relations between craftsmen and crafts. One can conclude that it was more desirable to be a craftsman than a soldier. This is evidenced by the fact that the majority of boys entered the world of craft via apprenticeship. In many ways this was very hard, but it was a way of avoiding military service. Another thing that games emphasize is male-female relationships. On the Military Frontier these were very important because the Military Frontier provided a large pool of unpaid army reserves for the Monarchy so early marriages and a high birth-rate were encouraged. Although a high birth-rate was necessary to 'make up for' those killed on the battlefields and in wars that the Habsburg Monarchy waged, the additional population was required in order to cultivate the fields that soldiers received from the emperor in lieu of money for their military service.

An example of the importance of marriage on the Military Frontier can be seen in the cases of Jela Varšić and Kata Čobić.

Very often, young girls ran away because they did not want to marry the man their families had chosen for them. Sometimes they ran away across the border with a neighbouring country. They would very often return to their community after some time spent in Bosnian villages near the Sava. This was the case of Jela Varšić who ran away to Turkey in November 1781, and returned to Gundinci in May 1783. She was punished with 40 whiplashes (on physical punishment of women see Buczynski, 1994, pp. 103-104). Then she was sent to the regiment headquarters in Vinkovci for quarantine and further punishment (CSA, BS, 1783).

Kata Čobić from Babina Greda did not want to marry the man her family had chosen so she took an apple with 20 silver coins from another man which in those times meant she accepted his marriage proposal. When the marriage with the new groom was announced in the church three times and everything was ready, Kata

disappeared. She returned 6 weeks later, on Christmas Eve. Without going through the quarantine, she came to the Midnight Mass when the church was full of people and the probability of contagion was very high (Vaniček, 1875, p. 567).

In doing this, Kata broke military regulations on the movement on the Military Frontier. When she was interrogated to determine her punishment, the girl admitted that she had run away because she no longer wanted to marry the bridegroom. He had cursed her soul and brain because she was late for 'the little wedding' (the church's wedding preparation). Kata claimed she had fled to her relatives in Piškorevci but there were two witnesses who confirmed that Kata was actually on the other side of the Frontier, in the Posavina village of Donja Mahala. She was sentenced to twenty whiplashes, and she and her family was quarantined and forbidden from any contacts with other villagers of Babina Greda (CSA, BS, 1784).

These two examples clearly show the need for the development of male-female relations from the earliest age. Children's games allow all children, regardless of their sex and age, to be involved. They provide a space for children to show their sympathies towards someone with kissing, touching, or choosing. Some of the games mentioned had this particular purpose (i.e. stronger and more open communication between boys and girls). Games can soften barriers and encourage male-female socialisation so that later on, at marriage age, embarrassing situations like the two mentioned above could be avoided.

Fundamentals of the Enlightenment such as pride, interest in education, and gathering information are also a part of these games. In its fundamental teaching, the Enlightenment ideas connected people through knowledge, but they spread further according to power and wealth. This point of view can be glimpsed in some of these games where knowledge and ability had an important role in the continuation of the game. However, a game could also be continued by giving 'a pledge,' a renunciation of something material which a child imitated from the real life. Since the Enlightenment accepted the idea of reasonable and spontaneous development of humankind, it is obvious how games found their place in education, especially in this area. These games were entertaining as well as educational because they moved from simple play to a source of knowledge and acquiring values of the society.

To conclude, because of the desire to create a well organised state, an individual was faced with new trials and required to have new skills which could be gained only through formal education. School becomes an important part of growing up, directly affecting the development of the whole society. However, the educational process for children in Slavonia, especially in the military area, was extremely difficult. As I have already stated, the interest in schooling was weak mainly because everything was taught in German.

A child immediately had to start learning the language which was utterly foreign to his ear and pronunciation... He was taught at the school desk in a boring manner, by a strict and sometimes merciless teacher who thought that a child must be severely punished if he could not immediately memorise difficult forms, unusual expressions... Such a teacher... did not feel any love for the child he had to teach. So education was based on coercion, and that is why people opposed it. (Cuvaj, 1910, p. 230)

Conversely, the organisation of formal education on the Military Frontier was an important element of civil, everyday social life. All children (boys and girls alike)

from the age of 6 to 12 had to attend school but barely 35% obeyed this regulation (Ibid, p. 226).

This reluctance towards the new school obligations was evidenced in children's games as well. Each game had elements such as tension, unification, exchange, connection... One can see that the concept of reality through games actually reflected the contrast between a peaceful life and everyday demands which very often broke their rhythm and harmony.

The educational process was therefore not painless. Games primarily reflected the wish for entertainment and relaxation, but they were also a way of learning although most people were not aware of it.

Summary

The list of children's games from the Brlic Family Archives is an important indicator of the great influence that these games had on learning in Slavonia during 18th and the first half of 19th century. During the Enlightenment, school and education became important segments in a child's life. This process was very difficult in Slavonia, especially in the Military Frontier region. Children's games became more than just games and evolved into sources of knowledge thus enabling the acquisition of social morals and norms. Games were frequently a supplement to learning and sometimes even the primary means of acquiring knowledge and new information. Besides learning, games played an important role in preparing children for some serious activity later in life. What is especially emphasised in games are male-female relationships, overcoming barriers between boys and girls and their socialisation.

References

Buczynski, A. (1994): Organizacija policije i pravosuda u Vojnoj krajini. *Povijesni prilozi* 13 [Organisation of Police and Legislation in the Military Frontier. *Historical articles* 13]. Zagreb.

Croatian State Archives (CSA), Knjiga zapovijedi (BS), Records for 17th May 1783.

Croatian State Archives (CSA), Knjiga zapovijedi (BS), Records for 29th December 1784.

Cuvaj, A. (1910): *Građa za povijest školstva Hrvatske i Slavonije III* [Material for the History of Education in Croatia and Slavonia III]. Zagreb.

Horbec, I. & Švoger, V. (2010): Školstvo kao politicum: Opći školski red iz 1774. *Analji za povijest odgoja* 9 [School system as politicum: General School Order of 1774. *Annals for the History of Education* 9].

Huizinga, J. (1996): *Homo ludens: o podrijetlu kulture u igri* [Homo ludens: On the Origin of Culture in Games]. Zagreb.

The Brlic Family Archives, Slavonski Brod, box 31, file 19.

Vaniček, F. (1875): *Specialgeschichte der Miliär Grenze*. Wien.